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## THE THREE FINAL DOCTRINES OF SPINOZA: INTUITION, *AMOR DEI*, THE ETERNITY OF THE MIND

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**Abstract:** The study deals with the matter of three of the most puzzling doctrines of Baruch Spinoza's system, the so-called 'final doctrines', which are intuitive knowledge, intellectual love of God, and the eternity of the (human) mind. Contrary to many commentators, but also in concordance with many others, this account strives to affirm the utmost importance of these doctrines to Spinoza's system as a whole, but mostly to his ethical theory. Focusing specifically on the cultivation of the human mind, the paper offers partial analyses of the central notions of these doctrines and their conceptual contexts. It is argued that the cultivation of the human mind, i.e., its determination to its perfect activity, should be considered as Spinoza's ultimate ethical goal, and that the mind truly only advances to this goal by means of these cognitive, affective, and intellectual transformations of thinking.

**Keywords:** Baruch Spinoza; intuition; love of God; intellect; eternity

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### Introduction

Although the concept of intuitive knowledge is an undeniable part of Spinoza's theory, it does not belong to the most popular doctrines among Spinoza's commentators. As Hasana Sharp (2011) puts it, many of them perceive it as an elitist type of philosophical knowledge inaccessible to ordinary thinkers. That is one of the reasons why Jonathan Bennett simply calls this doctrine "a disaster" (Bennett 1984, 357); others express their concerns in a more conciliatory manner and refer to it as too mystical or enigmatic (e.g. Melamed 2019). In our account of this doctrine – in concurrence with other interpretations – we aim to demonstrate that it may not be as mystical as it may sound, and also to indicate that without it, one is not able to completely understand Spinoza's philosophy – *and*, most importantly, his ethics, as we argue that it is necessary to incorporate this concept into what we may call the 'final stage' of Spinoza's ethical theory. At the same time, we acknowledge that *scientia intuitiva* is one of the most abstract elements of this theory, thus also hard to define, which we recognize as the reason of strong interpretative 'cautiousness' and often uncertain approach on the part of Spinoza's commentators.

### The intuitive sight

We believe that we should approach this concept with the highest possible certainty; and as such, we should pursue our understanding of intuition by means of something whose nature seems more evident to us. It means that our starting point, taken Spinoza's epistemological schedule into account, must obviously be the concept of reason. Intuition should be approachable through reason not only practically (as in, reason must necessarily

precede intuition in practical cognition), but also conceptually, which means that we may define this concept through its presumed relation to reason as an affined kind of knowledge. This is precisely how Sanem Soyarslan (2014) proceeds. According to her, the relation between reason and intuition is accountable in two ways: we may perceive them both as capable of arriving at the same conclusions (or ‘knowledges’), even though they differ in respect to the methods used; or, we may perceive them as distinct not only methodologically, but also in respect to their objects. That would mean that reason by itself cannot ‘ascend’ to intuition and its objects. Soyarslan recognizes the first presumed distinction as an account based on the difference of method, the other distinction as an account based on the difference of representative content.<sup>1</sup>

Spinoza (E2p40schol2)<sup>2</sup> defines the intuitive method as knowledge proceeding from an adequate idea of a certain attribute of God to the adequate idea of a particular thing’s essence. Rational method, on the other hand, is in said scholium defined as knowledge proceeding from adequate ideas of properties of things and the fact that we have common notions (*notiones communes*). Christof Ellsiepen (2011) understands this account of rationality as “an adequate knowledge of common properties”, that is, such properties for which we have, or may have, common (human) terms and notions. We presume it is an adequate understanding of this concept. Spinoza himself demonstrates the difference of rational and intuitive method on a well-known example of the mathematical operation of exponentiation: “Three numbers are given; it is required to find a fourth which is related to the third as the second to the first” (ibid., i.e., E2p40schol2). He then describes two possible variants of its solution. In the first variant there already must be some kind of knowledge of mathematical principles and conventions, which is then used practically in rational sequence of mathematical operations leading to the solution (rational mathematics). The second variant, which we may describe as an intuitive-mathematical solution, is simply described by Spinoza as a capacity (or ability) to “see” the whole sequence “in one intuition” (*uno intuitu videmus*), so that this kind of thinking, or *seeing*, is able to come to the result without the use of any rational mathematical operation.

At first glance, it may seem that this mathematical example has nothing in common with the ‘mystical’ intuition explicated in the fifth part of *Ethics*, which is a means of understanding the idea of God and obtaining blissfulness (*beatitudo*). However, Noa Naaman-Zauderer (2019)<sup>3</sup> considers this example to be a very functional “seeing metaphor” (Naaman-Zauderer 2019, 209), by means of which Spinoza seeks to describe an immediate, non-conceptual, and non-deductive character of intuitive knowledge. In her view, intuition comes to empirical understanding of objects of this kind of knowledge without the use of mediators, such as (rational) general concepts and deductive movement within the dynamics of temporality. We may thus say that what could take an ‘infinite’ time within the rational sequencing, intuition is able to grasp in one ‘sight’. In such grasp, there is no temporal split

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<sup>1</sup> As Soyarslan states, among the commentators favoring the difference of method are, for example, Ronald Sandler (2005) or Steven Nadler (2006); the difference in representative content is advocated by, for example, Edwin Curley (1973) or Soyarslan (2014) herself.

<sup>2</sup> Within this study we will refer to the quoted and referenced passages of Spinoza’s *Ethics* in the form of standard abbreviations used in commentaries: E(-*thics*, indicates part of the book), cor(-ollary), DefAff (Definitions of the Emotions in part 3 of the book), p(-roposition, in the said part of the book), pf (proof), schol(-ium). All referenced passages come from the English translation by Samuel Shirley (Spinoza 2002a); to complete some of the important passages, we use Latin text of *Ethics* from the *Opera posthuma* (Spinoza 1914).

<sup>3</sup> We consider the cited recent work of this author (Naaman-Zauderer 2019) to be one of the best and most elaborate interpretative studies devoted to the problem of intuition in Spinoza – we therefore strongly recommend it to the reader.

between the process of understanding and the understanding itself. Looking back at Soyarslan's distinctions, we should conclude that there really is a fundamental difference between reason and intuition on a methodological level.

As for the content of intuitive knowledge, from Spinoza's example one might conclude that it is identical with the content of rational knowledge: both kinds of knowledge may be used to solve the same problem, and both are essentially able to come to a result. While it is a perfectly understandable stance, we can see that it is not *entirely* true. The content of rational knowledge must include – apart from the problem itself – also certain concrete data in their immediate forms; in Spinoza's example they might be, as already mentioned, the acknowledging of ratio and its mathematical significance. But the content of intuitive knowledge does not have to include *anything* else apart from the problem itself; the reason for that is, in this particular mathematical example, that the 'essences' of mathematical objects are perfectly satisfactory for their one-sighted grasping. In *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, which marks his first journey into the epistemological and methodological realms, Spinoza argues that "the true method" is nothing else but the "truth itself, or the objective essences of things, or ideas (all these mean the same)" (Spinoza 2002d, 11). When one has an adequate idea of a triangle, i.e., understands the objective essence of a triangle, one must also necessarily have an idea of a circle; the true idea necessarily involves every other true idea within the idea of a thing. There is no need for intuition to rationally analyse these ideal contents of such idea, for intuitive knowledge involves them necessarily. The 'one sight' must, therefore, necessarily involve significantly more concrete data than rational thinking does; these data simply do not need to be the immediate content of thinking.<sup>4</sup>

### The intuitive effect

Intuition thus understands essences of things, not just their rational (adequate) properties. According to Spinoza, one who adequately understands the essences of things, also adequately understands God (E5p24); Soyarslan states in this context that intuition by means of its essential character "[...] descends to a level of particularity that reason cannot reach" (Soyarslan 2014, 248). Rational knowledge does not involve the knowledge of the essences of things, nor can it grasp the idea of God, but deals exclusively with adequate ideas of common, i.e., socially recognizable, properties, which – in our view – constitutes the grounds for understanding reason and intuition as different also in respect to their representative content. In the following propositions, however, we see another possible distinction in these kinds of knowledge, which we propose as the difference of *effect*:

The more capable the mind is of understanding things by the *third kind* of knowledge, the more it desires to understand things by this same kind of knowledge (E5p26);

The greater the number of things the mind understands by the *second and third kinds* of knowledge, the less subject it is to emotions that are bad, and the less it fears death (E5p38; emphasis added).

We can see that according to Spinoza, the greater ratio of intuition in the mind (as opposed to the imaginative types of thinking) leads to the greater desire of the mind to think in such a way. Therefore, the effect of intuition on the mind consists of determining the mind

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<sup>4</sup> The fact that these concrete data do not have to be the immediate content of thinking does not imply that there are no data present at all. Antonio Damasio (2005), who devoted many of his works and thoughts to find relevant scientific links between Spinoza's philosophy of mind and modern neuroscientific research, remarks in the context of intuitive content that "[...] we may know far more than we believe we know as we reach an intuitive conclusion" (Damasio 2005, 54).

to activity, which is exclusively a positive and affirmative effect. However, when we add reason to the ‘equation’, the conjunctive effect of both these kinds of knowledge cannot be expressed as exclusively positive anymore. We believe that the answer to this lies in the character of reason, which is a form of negation – to have an adequate idea of a property of a thing necessarily means that other adequate ideas of its other properties are not considered. This does not happen on the level of intuitive knowledge, which – by its definition – is the truth (or idea) itself. The conjunctive effect of reason and intuition on the human mind is thus defined negatively, in the sense of negation of the passive, or negative, affects. The immediate positivity (affirmativeness) of intuition is substituted by mediated positivity, i.e., the negation of a negation. We might say, then, that the immediate effect of intuition on the mind is its own activity, following from the principle of affirmation of adequate ideas; while activity is also, in the end, the effect of both of these kinds of knowledge, only it is mediated through the principle of negating inadequate ideas.

Naaman-Zauderer (2019) also stresses the importance of the ability of intuition to determine the activity of the mind; she builds her account of Spinoza’s ethics as a way to freedom on differencing between two types of freedom: rational freedom and intuitive freedom. Her perspective was formed mostly by this well-known theoretical ‘split’ of *Ethics*:

And now I have completed all that concerns this present life. For, as I said at the beginning of this scholium, in this brief account I have covered all the remedies against the emotions. [...] So it is now time to pass on to those matters that concern the duration of the mind without respect to the body (E5p20schol).

This particular scholium is interpreted by many commentators as an indicator of finalizing the ‘practical’ part of Spinoza’s ethics and a transition to its more speculative, mystical, idealistic contexts. But in our view, Spinoza’s ethical theory is actually properly articulated in the final part of his *Ethics*, and not the other way around. As for Naaman-Zauderer, she interprets this quote as changing focus from one specific type of freedom to another – from rational freedom to intuitive freedom – and for her, it is actually this intuitive freedom that is the true “freedom of the mind” following from “the mind’s ability to experience itself only in its formal reality, as pure activity” (Naaman-Zauderer 2019, 213). The basis for her dual account of freedom is (what she calls) Spinoza’s *dual perspective* in respect to existence itself, which he outlines in E5p29schol: the perspective of time or duration (*sub specie temporis seu durationis*), by which we conceive things according to the specific time and place of their duration; and the perspective of eternity (*sub specie æternitatis*), by which we conceive things in respect to their necessary involvement in eternal God’s essence. If we conceive our own mind and its activity *sub specie æternitatis*, we necessarily experience our own eternity, as Spinoza claims in the following scholium:

Yet it is impossible that we should remember that we existed before the body (*nos ante Corpus exstitisse*), since neither can there be traces of this in the body nor can eternity be defined by time, or be in any way related to time. Nevertheless, we feel and experience that we are eternal (*sentimus experimurque, nos æternos esse*). For the mind senses those things that it conceives by its understanding just as much as those which it has in its memory. Logical proofs are the eyes of the mind, whereby it sees and observes things. So although we have no recollection of having existed before the body, we nevertheless sense that our mind, insofar as it involves the essence of the body under the form of eternity, is eternal, and that this aspect of its existence cannot be defined by time, that is, cannot be explicated through duration (E5p23schol).

The easiness of these claims and their certainty deservedly induce interpretative confusion, taking into account the rigorous character of his philosophical thought and work, since he himself admits that we have no *real* proofs of the mind’s supposed eternity. They also seem

to be contrary to Spinoza's claims in the precedent works and theses of *Ethics*: mainly, the claims that human beings are finite things (Spinoza 2002b, 61), and that the human body – and its mind – will definitely die (E5p23 and proof). So how is it possible to 'feel and experience' one's own eternity? Or, if we indeed 'feel' this – is such a 'feeling' adequate?

### The intuitive perspective

In order to answer these questions, we must understand the internal connection of the so-called 'final doctrines' of Spinoza's philosophical theory: intuition, the eternity of the mind, and the intellectual love of God. We have already demonstrated that intuitive knowledge understands things through their true essences and that, according to Spinoza, the knowledge of these essences is caused by 'seeing' them through their eternal truths (in God) – this means that *scientia intuitiva* is actually the perspective of eternity (*sub specie æternitatis*), which the human being is capable of. Rational knowledge is, on the other hand, temporal knowledge; the "order and connection" (E2p7) of things and ideas is necessarily temporal, as we believe is exhibited in Spinoza's mathematical example – we cannot come to the conclusion without adequately *arranging* given ideas in the process. But arrangements of things do not constitute their essences, and since 'God's knowledge' is essential knowledge, God does not understand things through their rational proportions. The proportions of things can be deduced from their essential definitions and effectivity – but the essential knowledge cannot be deduced from anything else apart from the thing's essence itself. Intuition is thus the 'perspective of God'; and, as Spinoza claims, everything that the mind is able to grasp through this 'perspective', it necessarily delights in (E5p32), or, as he states in E5p27, the "highest possible contentment of mind (*Mentis acquiescentia*)" arises from this kind of knowledge.

This delight or contentment of the mind Spinoza characterizes as an intellectual love of God, or *amor Dei intellectualis* (E5p32cor). Why would Spinoza use the term 'love' for this special kind of feeling, if he defined this affect as a passive state in E3? One must remember the complete definition of love, which is joy accompanied by the idea of its cause (E3DefAff6); then, we believe, it seems logical and appropriate to use this definition for this kind of feeling, because it really *is* joy accompanied by the idea of its cause – it is only the *cause* that is different.<sup>5</sup> The cause of *amor Dei intellectualis* is the idea of God as an eternal and infinite *ens*, which, understandably, differs from temporal and unstable causes of affective states of love. According to Spinoza, it is not even possible to stop loving God (intellectually), precisely because the cause of such love is eternal, which means that this feeling must also be eternal. We might even allege that the 'eternality' of such love *really* transcends the temporal conditions, which also means the body and 'bodily' mind, and as such, it might continue even after death of these concrete durational existences. Definition-wise, it certainly seems that way. But how can it be? In E5p40schol, Spinoza states that the human intellect is part of the infinite intellect of God, constituted by adequate ideas of Himself and all things in Him. The infinite intellect–intellect relation comprises the central spot of Spinoza's panentheistic doctrine, alleged by the well-known claim that "all things [...] are in God and move in God (*in Deo esse & in Deo moveri*)" (letter 73; Spinoza 2002c, 942), and as such strongly resembles the archetypal religious ideas of human soul which is immortal and 'by' God, apart from the flesh, which is mortal and 'un-God-like'. We believe that this relation, and the archetypal ideas behind it, is the reason why Spinoza does not recommend lying even in the face of an imminent death (E4p72 and proof) – we shall not hurt or soil our intellect, or 'soul', in any way, because it will be soiled for all eternity.

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<sup>5</sup> An elaborate conceptual differentiation of love caused by either external or internal causes can be found in a recent study by Yitzhak Y. Melamed (2019).

However, eternity does not have any relation to time (E5p23schol), which must mean that it does not actually matter *when* – within human life – an individual either soils or understands its own eternity. Understanding mind must be eternal in its own right for all of eternity.

### **The love that makes the mind eternal**

At first glance, this is certainly confusing; but on the other hand, this doctrine is perfectly compatible with Spinoza's emphasis on emending the intellect as the highest good that any human being is able to obtain. The more we succeed in obtaining adequate ideas in this lifetime, the 'more eternal' we are in eternal God's mind; or, to be more precise, we already *are* eternal to the extent that we *will* obtain adequate ideas in this lifetime. *Amor Dei intellectualis* thus may be interpreted as some form of *consciousness* of this eternal intellectual involvement, as Spinoza claims that "the mind's intellectual love toward God is the love of God wherewith God loves Himself [...] insofar as He can be explicated through the essence of the human mind considered under a form of eternity (*sub specie æternitatis*)" (E5p36). In subsequent proof he specifies that this 'love' is related to the active nature of the mind, or, it is "[...] an activity whereby the mind regards itself accompanied by the idea of God as cause" (E5p36pf). Intellectual love of God is therefore most of all the consciousness of the activity of one's own mind, and since activity is nothing but the active essence of God, the consciousness of one's activity is – at least to some extent – also the (adequate) consciousness of God's active essence. We could say, then, that through the human mind, insofar as it is adequately active (and thus conscious), God's essence itself is conscious, too. For Spinoza, intellectuality is God's contemplation on Himself.<sup>6</sup>

From this it must be apparent that Spinoza's love of God may not be reduced to love towards His modifications; as Herman De Dijn states: "Intellectual love of God is not simply a joy of the intelligibility of things" (De Dijn 1996, 257). Joy of such character may also be induced by the adequate use of reason, or the negation of a negation, but the true freedom and understanding (which are the same thing) are nothing but the absolute positive affirmation of one's essence as existing in the eternity of God: "Intuitive knowledge, as well as the accompanying love for God, are always accompanied by the idea of oneself and one's own body as eternal essences pertaining to God" (De Dijn 1996, 258). That returns us to the 'problem' of the eternal part of the mind, which De Dijn characterizes as its 'eternal essence'. We believe that it had been sufficiently demonstrated that the mysterious 'something' that remains after the destruction<sup>7</sup> of the body and its (actual) mind, as Spinoza claims in E5p23, is the mind's intellect; but we have not yet sufficiently explicated why it should be eternal in the first place, especially since the mind and the body are the same thing explicated through two different attributes (E2p21schol), and we know *for a fact* that the body will die. The answer to this, as we understand it, lies in the different attributive natures of the body and the mind.

Insofar as we understand the mind as a determined mode of Thought of which real or actual object is the body, we conceive it under the form of temporality and in respect to two different attributes of God. In this conception of the mind there is no possibility of conceiving it as eternal; as the actual object of the mind dies, so does the mind itself. However, the mind is not constituted only by the idea of its object. Apart from the idea that constitutes the actual being of the mind, there is also an idea constituting its formal essence (or being) (cf. Spinoza

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<sup>6</sup> Melamed (2012) or Steven Nadler (2018) point to the intellectual love of God as to one of the many parallels between Spinoza's and Maimonides' philosophies. There is no doubt that Spinoza is to be considered an explicit follower of Maimonides' teachings, especially regarding his very specific form of philosophical theology.

<sup>7</sup> In Spinoza's system, destruction is only possible due to external causes, since it is not possible for the essence of a thing to involve any definitive contradiction (E3p4).

2002b, 104). This idea does not have an actual, but only an ideal object, i.e., the mind itself; in such a conception of the mind, we need only one of God's attributes to conceive it (Thought), as the formal idea or essence of the mind is immediately constituted by God's thinking essence, which is His infinite intellect. The infinite intellect of God is the immediate infinite mode of the attribute of Thought (E1p16pf),<sup>8</sup> and, from the perspective of infinite modes,<sup>9</sup> every existing thing is necessarily part of these modes, and thus also infinite. Not even the human body – after its destruction – ‘vaporizes’ into Nothingness as it if never even existed; individuals constituting its form simply modulate their (effective) essences according to intense external causes affecting them, and thus change themselves in existence, i.e., the living thing becomes a non-living thing, but on the level of infinite *motion-and-rest*, nothing ever happens (yet also everything happens). We may consider the human mind in similar contexts: if *anything* exists in *any* attribute of God, then it is – by necessity of the eternity of God – eternal, forever present (even if in other essences or forms). Existence itself is eternity in the same way that God's essence is His existence.

To look at one's own mind *sub specie æternitatis* means to understand it as an active element of infinite activity, dynamics, and, as Errol E. Harris puts it, a part of “concrete and complete wholeness” (Harris 1995, 24), which the substance of Spinoza's philosophical theology certainly might be characterized as. The more the mind understands it, the more infinite and eternal it is, but it is also important to stretch – along with, for example, Don Garrett (2009), that Spinoza does not imply by this doctrine the continuous existence of personal consciousness, personality, or any form of what we may call ‘personal eternity’. Everything that makes us human – in this lifetime – such as a specific kind of perception, feelings, consciousness of one's body and so on, will, logically, follow the decay of the body. Is there anything, then, that we may experience as eternal both in this lifetime *and* within God's intellect? Spinoza certainly implies so (“we feel and experience that we are eternal”). According to Naaman-Zauderer (2019), the specific ‘consciousness’ that is present both in our bodily minds *and* our eternal minds is the consciousness of one's mind as a pure thinking activity, which, in her view, resonates with Cartesian *cogito*, in which the certainty of the existence of the meditator follows from the “immediate consciousness” of his thinking processes (Naaman-Zauderer 2019, 217). Similar Cartesian association is presented, for example, by Olli Koistinen (2009), according to whom it would be necessary for Spinoza to reformulate “I think, therefore I am” into more adequate “The more I think, the more I am” (Koistinen 2009, 165).

Koistinen also asks what *exactly* the object of this eternal part of the mind is (as a complex formal idea) and suggests that it may be the formal essence of the body. He views this formal essence of the body as an *a priori* condition for the human mind to be *embodied* in time (Koistinen 2009, 167–169), which in our view seems a little far-fetched, especially since there is no actual proof in Spinoza's philosophy to assume that the temporal existence of the body needs any other ‘*a priori* conditions’ than the essence of Extension as it follows from the essence of God. But this objection may be overcome by understanding such ‘*a priori* conditions’ not as essential conditions, but logical ones; we may state, then, that

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<sup>8</sup> While the immediate infinite mode of the attribute of Extension is the dynamics of *motion-and-rest* (cf. E1p32cor2).

<sup>9</sup> The concept of infinite modes is one of the class of concepts of Spinoza's philosophy which have not met with a great interpretative response. According to Melamed (2018), the reason for this is that it is one of Spinoza's few *original* concepts, i.e., concepts which are not to be found in his philosophical predecessors. There are, however, commentators who attempted a comprehensive interpretation; for example, Errol E. Harris (1995, 22–51), Melamed (2013, 2018), or Kristin Primus (2019).

For Spinoza's grasp of these modes, see E1p21–23 in *Ethics*, or letters 63 and 64 from his correspondence (Spinoza 2002c, 916–919).

the intellect is an infinite, eternal, *and* an *a priori* condition for our finite being in the sense of a logical relation of the finite to the infinite in Spinoza's system. This relation, as we see it, is not even a relation in the strict sense of the word – it is probably more appropriate to articulate it as a form of mutual definitory dependence: the finite is the only necessary definitive condition for the infinity of the finite (as explicated in Spinoza's concept of infinite modes), and the infinite is the only necessary definitive condition for the finiteness of infinity. The infinite–finite problem, however, falls beyond the scope of this paper.

## Conclusion

In the following concluding remarks, we will briefly try to summarize the main points, thoughts, and findings of this paper. As must already be clear from our approach to this problem (of the three 'final doctrines'), we do not consider them as theoretically 'disastrous'. Quite the opposite. Intellect, as the part of the mind that is eternal; intuition, as the true intellectual method of acquiring essential knowledge; and love of God, as the highest possible contentment of the mind, we consider as some of the most complex, philosophically richest, and arguably theoretically 'successful' concepts in Spinoza's philosophy as a whole. We fully agree with Naaman-Zauderer's (2019) stance that intuition is the key concept of Spinoza's ethics – the reason for this being that it is the only epistemological method bringing the utmost certainty of (adequate) thinking and action. And that is precisely what Spinoza's ethical system was presumably wished to be built upon: *certainty*. As for the eternal part of the mind, or intellect, it is the only way to be 'close' to God – which we also think was Spinoza's utmost ethical goal. This is also evident from his concept of *amor Dei intellectualis*, which, we argue, effects the human mind solely positively, affirmatively, and actively, and it does so in such an *essential* way that nothing else can. These 'final doctrines' are to be considered the *ethical* conclusion of Spinoza's metaphysical 'cycle', which starts at the idea of *causa sui*,<sup>10</sup> and ends at the idea of God (and intellectual love for Him). Without these doctrines, we believe that the ultimate goal of Spinoza's philosophical efforts – which we regard to be *ethics, or activity* – simply could not be reached.<sup>11</sup>

The core of the critique of many commentators that has been outlined in the introduction, i.e., that intuitive knowledge – and by means of it also the intellectual love of God – is an exclusive and elitist concept inaccessible to most people, can be answered by the words of Spinoza himself, who claims that the path to adequate understanding and blissful life may seem very difficult, "[...] yet it can be found" (E5p42schol). Hynek Tippelt (2010) articulates this belief in such a way that God "[...] is therefore accessible to *every* mind, and since this idea constitutes the greatest affection of joy in mind, *every* mind is also at its disposal to the greatest satisfaction and eternity" (Tippelt 2010, 155; emphasis added). Every human being – or, more precisely, every corporeal being with mind constituted by the (eternal) intellect – *truly* possesses the ability to be eternal only through an adequate understanding, i.e., becoming *aware* of this eternal involvement in eternity. Spinoza thus offers a much more

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<sup>10</sup> We would like to clarify here that we view the *causa sui* model of God as only functional at the metaphysical level of Spinoza's thought. It would (probably) be impossible to base ethical system on this concept alone. We therefore differentiate (function-wise) between the two models of God: God as *causa sui*, the mysterious '*id*' as the basis for existence; and God as *causa immanens* as the basis for ethics. The concept of *causa immanens* signifies the immanent relation of God's essence to the things (i.e., its modifications) which it necessarily involves. The concept of *causa sui*, on the other hand, signifies God's relation to (His own) existence.

<sup>11</sup> Charlie Dunbar Broad (1930) interprets these 'final doctrines' as the "[...] philosophical expressions of certain religious and mystical experiences which Spinoza [...] may have enjoyed and which seem *supremely* important for those who have them" (Broad 1930, 15; emphasis added). He therefore similarly views them as important, and perhaps the most characteristic parts of his system.



complex and more inclusive – Nadler even uses the term “more liberal” in this context (Nadler 2018, 311) – image of a man capable of achieving this degree of (moral) perfection than, for instance, Maimonides, in whom Spinoza apparently found inspiration. Indeed, a human being does not need to be a full-blooded philosopher or part of some higher intellectual elite to become a conscious participant in God’s perfection. The starting point may be the simplest – our own *cogito*; Spinoza’s philosophically exposed God is somewhere ‘there’.

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